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PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS

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THE MODEL LAW FOR MORBIDITY REPORTS.

ADOPTED BY THE CITY OF SPOKANE, WASH.

On January 4, 1915, the common council of the city of Spokane, Wash., adopted an ordinance requiring the notification of cases of preventable diseases. The ordinance adopted was the model State law for morbidity reports modified to meet the needs of a municipality. The ordinance as adopted will be found on pages 958 to 960 of this issue.

HOW PLAGUE MAY BE CARRIED FROM PLACE TO PLACE.

An occurrence of unusual interest is reported from Seattle, Wash. A short time ago the State Horticulturist of Washington, who also acts for the Federal service, had occasion to open a large box of plants which arrived at the port of Seattle from Yokohama, Japan. On opening this box of plants a rat was found in the soil at the bottom of the box. The inspector killed the rat with a stick and delivered it to the local representative of the Public Health Service, who, after a careful bacteriological examination, reports that it was suffering from chronic (bubonic) plague.

A careful investigation into the history of the box makes it certain that there were only two possibilities: Either that the rat came all the way from Japan inside the box of plants, or that it entered the box at the appraiser's building, at Seattle, as that building was the only place in the city of Seattle where the box was opened previous to its opening on the sidewalk at the place of business of the importer to whom the plants were consigned.

The report states that the conditions were such that the rat might have survived the journey from Japan to the United States, and while admitting the possibility that the rat may have entered the box in Seattle, it is not considered probable that it did. At any rate, the rat was in the box and nailed up in such manner as to make escape practically impossible when it left the appraiser's building. The only way the rat could have escaped would have been for it to have gnawed its way through the box with its teeth.

The distance from the appraiser's building to the importer's place was about half a mile, and it was fortunate indeed that the rat in question made this short journey instead of having been shipped halfway across the continent to infect some other locality.

The Public Health Service has instituted measures looking to the systematic examination of these shipments with the view of determining the relative frequency of such occurrences. When it is remembered that one infected rat is quite sufficient to reproduce the disease in any locality to which it may gain access, the importance of this circumstance can hardly be overestimated.

FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE.

ITS RELATION TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

Foot-and-mouth disease is essentially a disorder of certain domesticated animals, chiefly cattle and hogs, more rarely sheep and goats, and exceptionally dogs and cats. The control and eradication of the disease is a function of the authorities in charge of communicable diseases in animals—in this country, of the Bureau of Animal Industry. The measures which they find necessary to employ are most drastic, but are followed apparently by results which justify the large expense involved.

Although European investigators have shown that it is possible to produce artificially a strong, though possibly rather transient, immunity, the procedure has not as yet been put upon a practicable economic basis. Until the ultramicroscopic cause of this disease shall have been cultivated upon artificial medium there seems little likelihood of improvement upon the present eradicative measures, which involve wholesale destruction of infected herds, and onerous quarantine procedure. The spread of the disease is attributed in no small part to the carrying of the infection on the hands or clothing of persons who examine, milk, or otherwise come in contact with diseased animals.

If this be the case, then it must be true that many persons come into the most intimate contact with the virus during an epizootic, which taken in connection with the extreme rareness of the disease in human beings argues a marked insusceptibility on the part of mankind. Nevertheless, a number of cases have been reported in man, a few of which, chiefly in children, have resulted fatally. Most of the human cases have been acquired by drinking the milk of infected cattle and this seems the means of transmission most to be feared, although more intimate contact with diseased animals accounts for some of the cases.

Prevention of the disease in human subjects will therefore involve: The eradication of the epizootic by means directed against the diseased animals; the avoidance of the human consumption of all milk and unheated milk products known to come from diseased herds;